

## Seeing Pakistan through the Gaze of Cartoonists- Editorial Cartoons Epitome of National Interest

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### Abstract

*This paper intends to elaborate how the editorial cartoons represent the internal as well as external political affairs of Pakistan and, thereby, construct an image in the minds of the viewers around the world. Political cartoons are caricatures that overstate personal characteristics for making the picture more humorous and the characters instantly recognizable. Cartoons are used by editorials to criticize injustice, corruption, and other social evils. A newspaper article with a lot of words can be reduced merely to a cartoon for conveyance of information and ideas. Nowadays, cartoons are one of the most powerful weapons in the armory of a newspaper for political analysis. The aim of this paper is to analyze the political cartoon focusing the linguistic elements used in the cartoons and explain how newspapers use language in the form of cartoons. The research provides a visual and rhetorical analysis of editorial cartoons. It shows that the political cartoons in Pakistan follow a healthy practice of criticizing intolerance, injustice, political corruption and social evils. Therefore, besides other functions, political cartoons provide healthy criticism on everyday events and situations; hence they are embodiment of national interest.*

**Key words:** political affairs of Pakistan, editorial cartoons, political analysis

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## **INTRODUCTION**

In the 21<sup>th</sup> century, Media is performing a remarkable part in the dissipation of information around the globe. It is playing an unprecedented role not only in the construction of identity of political figures and personalities but also of nations and countries. It is manifested through the cartoons presented in the online or offline newspapers, on websites, on blogs or through any other social media platform like Facebook etc. These cartoons are not merely for fun, but they are also expressive in their essence. Hence, they are responsible for representing people, countries, relations, situations and circumstances etc.

This paper intends to elaborate how the image of a country's internal as well as external matters are represented through cartoons, thereby, constructing a specific image of the country in the other world. The present research analyzes the cartoons specifically related to the representation of Pakistan.

## **BACKGROUND OF POLITICAL CARTOONS**

As far as the origin of political or editorial cartoons is concerned, it is traced back to Leonardo de Vinci's sketches because it employs the technique of caricaturing. William Hogarth (1697-1764) has been accredited with the development of political cartoons. William Hogarth satirized the corruption of British politics in 18<sup>th</sup> century through the pictures Paulson and Hogarth (1989: 43). James Gillray is referred to as the father and king of political cartoons (Wright & Evans, 1851; Gillray & Piltz, 1971; Sambourne, 1892). Historically, Benjamin Franklin is said to be the originator of editorial cartoons. The first published editorial cartoons in an American newspaper are associated with him, portraying the famous caption "Join or Die" depicting an image of the snake dissected and labeled into different colonies (Burns, 2007).



Image: Benjamin Franklin (1706-90) source Heitzmann, 1998:3)

Heitzmann (1998) describes about Ben Franklin's and his famous snake image as:

Ben Franklin's Join or Die (severed snake) first to appear in an American newspaper-The Pennsylvania Gazette (May/9/1754). It was reprinted in every American newspaper shortly after its initial publication. The snake, which he divided into eight parts, had been chosen because a popular superstition of the time was that a severed serpent had the ability to reunite and come back to life. During the Stamp Act Crisis(1765) and the beginning of the Revolution (1774), the cartoon again appeared and received wide circulation-as a handbill (Culhane, 1975 cited by Heitzmann, 1998: 3).

Fetsko (2001) explains the reasons for the success of political cartoons in colonial America, in the revolutionary period and later in the colonies struggling for independence from the Britain. The success of political cartoons can be found in its appeal to the "masses". In a society such as colonial America where many of the citizens were uneducated, a cartoon could convey political thought and sway among citizens that were unable to read editorials written with the same intent. The period leading up to the revolutionary war, provided many events to be satirized in cartoons and help to unite the colonists in their struggle for independence from Britain (Fetsko, 2001: 3). According to Fetsko, the cartoon became a popular art from the 1700's in Europe. Originally the cartoons were attached to a pamphlet or broadside. It could be posted throughout city. With the development of printing press cartoons gained life. As Fetsko writes:

The development of printing press brought cartoon to life. Before that an artist drawing suffered from two handicaps: it would be by only seen a few people and could easily be killed by destroying the original. The printing press allowed a drawing to be seen by a wide

audience as well as to reproduce these drawings more quickly and more cheaply (Fetsko, 2001: 3).

Political cartoons are caricatures that overstate personal characteristics to create a humorous picture of political figures. They are on the rise because they address an issue in a direct way. A political cartoon merely rely on an image, picture or drawing to convey information and ideas, whereas, on the other hand a typical newspaper article relies on hundreds of words for this purpose. Cartoons, in every newspaper of the world, play an important role for affecting and manipulating the ideas of peoples around the globe.

Contrary to a news column or article, cartoons are capable of directly analyzing a political issue. Cartoons also can often be more accurate than a text-based analysis using a lot of words. Indeed, “a picture is worth a thousand words.” As Heitzmann (1998) puts it:

The cartoon conveys its message quickly, sometimes subtly, sometimes brashly, but generally gets its point across to more people than do editorials (Heitzmann, 1998: 3)

Political cartoons have the power to elicit a variety of responses because cartoon artists craft their work to express political views that are often controversial. We can say that political cartoons resemble time capsules. They provide information to the viewers about the time of their creation. Since they denote particular events, they may seem to be locked in a given age. As, Ghilzai, S.A. (2020 a) demonstrated in the “History of Pakistanis’ Power Politics-from 1947 to 2020- through the Critical Lenses of Cartoonists-Analysis of Political cartoons”. The article shows how the cartoons of a specific period represent the time and period in which they are produced. It reveals the function of cartoons beyond just humor or politics; cartoons not only record the history, the historical events and situations; but also provide critical lenses to view them simultaneously. It is indeed a very unique way for the creation, evaluation and maintenance of history and historical records.

The themes which the cartoons represent are found to be universal which go beyond the usual limits of time and space. Some aspects like the use of the language, references and outdated symbols

may get lost over time. Still, social and cultural change would not account for the cartoons to be obsolete.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Cartoons affect states of minds, points of view and perspectives on socio-political matters. The processing and interpretation of cartoons requires knowledge of history, culture and politics. Since the artists and cartoon creators do not interpret visual and rhetorical artifacts themselves, so it is not really possible to examine the motivation of the cartoonists. For example, Foss (1992) maintained that images actively reflect beliefs, attitudes, and values of a society rather than exclusively reflecting the views of their creators. Therefore, it can be claimed that cartoons are not interpreted by cartoonists. Rather, they are actively explained by their audiences (Edwards & Winkler, 1997).

Different studies have focused on different variables. For example, Steuter et al. (2008) studied the procedure in which the editorial cartoons are composed according to those roles that are played by them in society. Lamb (2004) views political cartoons “as critical artifacts used to lampoon political leaders and their contemptible policies”. Medhurst and DeSousa (1981) did the analysis and examined the nature of cartoons. They identified four principal themes: ‘political commonplaces, literary/cultural allusions, personal character traits, and situational themes’. Morris (1992) says “Cartoons depictions are usually satirical; their militant effects are just like that of armory used for launching attacks on the political leaders and the democratic process through pictorial depictions”.

Benoit et al. (2001) studied and analyzed 2000 political cartoons concerning Clinton-Lewinsky-Starr Affair focusing on the impeachment and investigations of the president Clinton. Connors (2005) studied political cartoons and claimed that cartoons are used as tool for manipulation of voters. Eko (2007) examined how four African political leaders in the post-cold war era were dehumanized and de-territorialized by African newspapers. According to Townsend et al. (2008), political cartoons do the function of political satire as graphic illustrations. Political cartoons are also used to increase the reputation of the candidates. For instance, Tsakona (2009) used a multimodal theory of humour as an analytical framework to explore language and interaction in cartoons in his

study. Tsakona defines cartoon humor a complex process which involves “different mechanisms of language interplay between verbal and nonverbal devices such as exaggeration, contradiction and metaphor”. He suggests that the “audience need to pay close attention to both verbal and visual details contained by each cartoon to grasp its meaning.”

El-Falaky (2019) analyzed Egyptian political cartoons by employing Kress and van Leeuwen (1996, 2006) model. They evaluated editorial cartoons from Al-Arham Egyptian newspaper. The cartoons depicted Egyptian people and Egyptian officials, social relations and gender empowerment, socioeconomic status of the country, national values and identity, 30th June revolution 2013, democracy and powerful US, social equality, political conflict of interest etc. they found that through editorial cartoons Al-Ahram conveys its political and ideological stances to its audience.

The political cartoons in Pakistan have a long and healthy tradition of criticizing intolerance, injustice, political corruption and social evils. The Analysis below shows how critically the artists presents the above mentioned issues.

## **ANALYZING POLITICAL CARTOONS**

Political cartoons are also known as editorial cartoons. These cartoons are illustrations which comprise commentary about current events, issues or political figures and personalities. The artist who draws these kind of cartoons is called an editorial cartoonist. This section will answer a number of questions;

1. What is cartoon and its history?
2. How does the cartoonic representation influence the mind of the masses?

Cartoons are used in editorials for the purpose of criticizing injustice, corruption, and other social evils. These cartoons are thought provoking and their aim is to educate or convey information about current issues to their viewers.

Cartoonists make use of different methods and techniques to make their political cartoons effective i.e. Symbolism, Analogy, Exaggeration, Labeling and Irony (For detail see. Ghilzai, 2020 b). AS Heitzmann (2001) demonstrates:

The political cartoons, defined as interpretive artistry makes use of caricatures, symbolism and other techniques to present a message or point of view concerning people, events or situations (Heitzmann, 2001: 3).

Political cartoon analysis seeks to answer a number of questions.

- What issue is this political cartoon about?
- What is the cartoonist's opinion on this issue?
- What other opinion can you imagine another person having on this issue?
- Did you find this cartoon persuasive? Why or why not?

## **METHODS**

The study adopted the tools and methods employed by Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996) in "Reading Images: the Grammar of Visual Design". In order to develop this model, Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996) adopted Halliday's (1978) linguistic conventions about the socio-semantic nature of discourse. Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996:119) demonstrated two important elements for inspecting visual images i.e. the participants and the relations.

- 1- represented participants (the people, the places and things depicted in images)
- 2- interactive participants (the people who communicate with each other through images, the producers, the viewers of the images)

They further outlined three of kind of relations for examining visual images.

- 1- Relations between represented participants
- 2- Relations between interactive and represented participants (the interactive participants' attitude towards the represented participants)
- 3- Relations between interactive participants (the thing interactive participants do to or for each other through images).

### **Cartoon Sample and Approach to Sample**

The analysis focuses on the cartoons' caption, thought bubbles or written texts. Essentially, cartoons are the data of the study. 15 cartoon images were extracted purposefully from different Pakistani newspaper; *The Jang*, *The Dawn*, *The Dailytimes*, *The nation*. After the selection of some specific cartoons, they were analyzed in terms of finding out answers to a number of questions. These questions were of two types; Questions concerning the identification of main idea,

1. To what political event or idea is the cartoon referring?
2. What key person(s) are targeted in the cartoon?
3. How has the artist depicted these people? Are they distorted in any way? Does the artist's portrayal of characters cast them in a negative or positive light?
4. Identify and explain any symbols incorporated in the cartoon.
5. Identify and explain captions, labels, titles and/or speech bubbles. How do these contribute to the cartoon's message?
6. What is the message of the cartoon? How is the artist trying to persuade the reader?
7. What impact and/or reaction is the artist attempting to trigger

And questions concerning the with analysis of the method used by the artist,

1. How does the method used by the artist effectively convey a political message?
2. Identify and explain the use of: Juxtaposition (the state of being side by side or close together, in a figurative sense)  
Irony  
Exaggeration

The cartoons were not collected systematically according to some specific time period, publisher or type of political party. The cartoons were collected randomly.

### **ANALYSIS**

Let's explore the various elements of political cartoons. The Analysis will be based on how and what kind of artistic techniques the cartoonist utilizes, and what effects he intends to create on the public.



It will also describe the agenda of the cartoonists. The cartoonists' use visual symbols and metaphors to highlight the social evils, for example, injustice and corruption etc. it shows how keenly they manifest national interest and public welfare agenda in their cartoons.



Image 1: Khalid Hussain 27-03-2016

In image 1 the cartoonist Khalid Hussain has explained the whole story of Pak-India relations. The artist's aim is to provoke the viewers about the non-seriousness of the government on issues where it should have been very much concerned and serious. The irony in the words and images is very clear-cut. He has severely criticized the hatred and misconceptions of India about Pakistan which shows how much India is friendly towards Pakistan. This is a satire on both sides; India and Pakistan. India tires to make use of every utilizable opportunity to demoralize and defame Pakistan. While, on the other hand, Pakistani government have been represented as dumb as a deaf and as mute as a dead. The cartoonist has put a question mark to the Pakistani government for its silence when the security agencies captured Indian agents red-handed with proofs. This is an example of irony on relations of the two countries and represents their international policies.



Image 2: Khalid Hussain 7-07-2013

In image 2 the artist has hit very hardy the economic position of Pakistan as internal matter in this cartoon. The cartoonist has used visual images; where the hands-tied and blindfolded person represents the poor and helpless masses of Pakistan. The caricature of poor man in the cartoon actually speaks for itself that how the artist view the people and what he wants to make them realize. His intention is to make them aware of the sufferings that will suck their blood in the form of IMF. Pakistan, up to the time, has been receiving loans from IMF. It has not only paralyzed the state but has also devalued the country in the world. This is an irony on the government and the nation for their ineffectiveness and inability to run the country.



Image 3: Khalid Hussain 27-06-2013

Image 3 stands for the international relations of Pakistan with most powerful country of the time-the USA. The two visual symbols in the cartoon stand for the two governments, that of the USA and of Pakistan respectively. The image of Nawaz sharif is representing Pakistan. It was Nawaz sharif's government in 2013. The label war on

terror is used to symbolize the burden on the government. Apparently, America is a friend to Pakistan. The cartoonist has brought into light that how much he is concerned with the problems of Pakistan and how he deals with Pakistan. Friendship requires equal status in today's materialistic world of trade and business. This cartoon illustrates the Pak-America relations. Where America is not sharing the burden of war on terror rather has put it all on the shoulders of Pakistan.



Image 4: Khalid Hussain 24-04-2016

The image 4 is a representation of internal affairs of Pakistan. The cartoonist has used symbolism to highlight the curse of corruption as the hindrance to the development of Pakistan. The agenda of the cartoonist is to make people aware about the curse of corruption, which is weakening the country, and urge them to act actively for the eradication of corruption. The artist's symbolism is a strong argument to make people think of the corruption and be practical for its eradication to save Pakistan.



Image 5: Khalid Hussain 22-04-2016

In image 5 the cartoonist Khalid Hussain portrayed the active and positive role of army to cure Pakistan from the disease of corruption. Army is not concerned with the political matters; yet the army chief has shown his support to the government against evils of corruption by starting from his own institute. This positive act shows that, unlike the past decade, the army will not interfere with the democracy. But, instead it will provide support for the government to save Pakistan and get rid of the problem of corruption.



Image 6: Khalid Hussain 29-01-2015

The artist's symbolism of government and terrorism have been put in a kind of humorous but deadly serious way to invokes the audience about internal matter of the country. This cartoon highlights the behavior and seriousness of government towards terrorism. The cartoonist shows his criticism on government's seriousness toward terrorism. The government has been presented as unconcerned to the most serious threat.



Image 7: Khalid Hussain 5-03-2013

Image 7 is describing the situation of Karachi, the largest industrial city of Pakistan. But the worst condition of the city has been described by the artist in the form of visual symbols and metaphors. The tree

stands for the city and the man stands for the country while the snakes represent the elements responsible for its destruction. The leaves stand for the economy and the flying-away birds stand for the investors leaving the country considering it as an insecure state. The city is the backbone to Pakistan's economy. The death of the tree will affect the whole nation. The visual features of the cartoon presents the artist's views and arguments for the welfare of the state.



Image 8: Feica 20-02-2016

Image 8 presents criticism on NAB (National Accountability Beauru). The national institutes, like NAB, are responsible for smooth and effective running of government and country. The image shows that NAB have been on a wild goose chase; the artist presented them with black goggles, blinded view and magnifier. How is it possible for someone to find out something with magnifier if he is wearing black glasses? This argues that the effectiveness of such institutes needs to be reviewed for developing more rigorous and efficient system.



Image 9: Khalid Hussain 23-09-2013

In image 9 the use of symbolism can be observed very clearly. The artist has used the dollar sign which represents the power of dollar

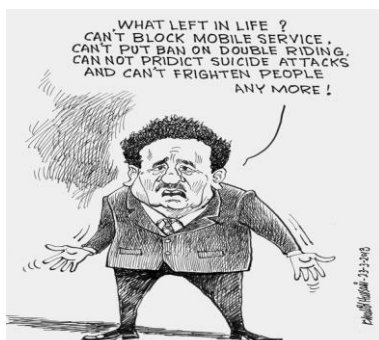
and economics of Europe. It shows the supremacy of dollar over Rupee, and the person symbolized here is the prime minister of Pakistan, Nawaz Shareef (in 2013). The Government's policies, no matter directed to which side, are directly or indirectly benefiting dollar. Therefore, these policies are poisonous and uprooting the strength of Rupee, thus, as a result weakening the financial position of Pakistan.

In other sense the growing tree represents their foreign assets which the Pakistani politicians have in European countries like America and England etc.



**Image 10: Khalid Hussain 1-06-2012**

Image 10 shows the irony of situation. The negotiations between Taliban and Pakistan could not work because Pakistan has been supporting America in war on terror. Therefore, Pakistan was not in position to welcome peace talks. Pakistan had to fight America's war on terror. The peace talks fails because both Taliban and Pakistan are looking towards America. The symbol of drone is used to represent America. The artist used labels and bubbles to convey the intended message.



**Image 11: Khalid Hussain 23-03-2013**

In image 11 the artist used speech bubble to convey the intended message. Blockage of mobile service and ban on double riding are the two famous strategies that are always used by the interior ministry of government to avoid acts of terrorism. The aim of the cartoonist is to point out and ridicule these kinds of strategies because they are useless and people don't fear any longer because of the inability of these strategies in avoiding suicide attacks.



Image 12: Khalid Hussain 20-04-2016

In image 12 the cartoonist has presented the recent ups and downs in the politics of Pakistan. The big bang of Panama Leaks can take the government down any times and shows the inconsistency of democracy as the internal matter of states, which, as a result, draws a negative image of the country abroad. Ups and downs in politics are sometimes regarded as normal but, but since its beginning, Pakistan is in worst condition politically than its neighboring countries.



Image 13: Khalid Hussain 9-04-2016

In image 13 the cartoonist has drawn the attention of the audience to the most serious and lethal threat of corruption which has taken the whole country in its grip. The personification of Pakistan as a person and symbolism of strong hand holding him shows how the artist views the situation of Pakistan.

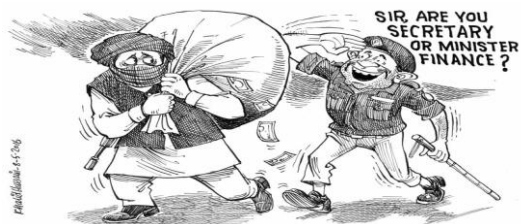


Image 14: Khalid Hussain 8-05-2016

In image 14 the cartoonist used symbolism to represent the two most recent incidents in the country. Firstly, the security is so much fearful of the bureaucrats that they do not even bother to check the VIP figures like politicians and people of authority. Secondly, secretaries and finance ministers are the ones who themselves are involved in looting the money of state, and they seem to be as free as a lions in jungle. The artist has purposefully described the whole story to the audience through a visual image.



Image 15: Khalid Hussain 8-9-2013

In image 15, the artist conveyed the message through the symbolization. The agenda is to justify how lethal the IMF loan actually is for the economy of Pakistan. This represents the country as bankrupt in the world. The artist depicts how the IMF loan uplifts the economy with a heavy burden but it traps the loan receivers. The artist represented IMF loan as a trap in the neck.

## CONCLUSION

Editorial cartoons have become a part and parcel of every newspaper around the globe drawing an ultimate position of the country in non-



verbal communication. These cartoons can change the people's opinions unconsciously; they are used to communicate information and ideas in the most effective way where other verbal communication cannot be used. For instance, use of verbal communication as such in articles and columns may cause trouble for the writer but this can be avoided in case of cartoonic depictions.

In Pakistani newspaper, the political cartoons are mostly used to criticize and satirize the injustice of political system, the unfair use of political powers and the gap between the political leaders and the public. These cartoons are self-speaking drawings which directly strike the minds of the viewers through visual images and highlight the socio-political evils in such an effective way that conveys more than an entire article or a column may do. These cartoons show what people think (or have been thinking at some particular point in time) of the leaders. They also cause a change in the viewers' perceptions about political figures like Zardari, Nawaz Shreef, Musharaf and Fazal-Ul-Rahman etc.

In addition and most important thing to know is that editorial cartoon can cause disturbances and controversies in the world as what happened in 2006 when Danish newspaper published cartoon on Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), and a subsequent example is that of Bangladesh in the following year 2007. These two examples can account for the reason to set up some laws and regulations for the publication of cartoons.

Moreover we can claim that cartoons have a universal language which everyone can read. A foreigner may not be able to decode the Pakistani editorial cartoons, because they need background knowledge to interpret and get the clear idea about the current situation and events in the state.

As the sum of the discussion above, we can claim that editorial cartoons actually present the true image of those matters which are of grave concern and importance to the countries. The same is true in Pakistan. The images illustrated and discussed above shows that cartoonists mostly seek the welfare of the country and public. Therefore, it is justified that editorial cartoons are epitome of national interest.

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